

Getting the Twins by QueenForADay

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Summary:

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"I mean," Eddie winces, wishing the words would come out that bit easier, and not try to catch in his throat. "If we ever have kids, what...what do you think I'll be like?"

Richie doesn't answer for a while. "I think you'll be a great dad. You'll look after them the way a parent should."

Getting the Twins

Things had to be done in order. That's what it had always seemed like to Eddie, particularly in the years before returning to Derry. His life had fallen into place, one event after another. Girlfriend. Fiancée. Wife. All he was missing was having kids; and that was something he never even wanted to mention in front of Myra, let alone try and discuss it with her.

But there's a therapist in lower Manhattan who he sees every Thursday afternoon, and she's been patient with him while he tries to get his shit in order. Because it needs to be in order. He needs to address everything, put each issue into a box, and throw it off a fucking bridge.

The only problem is, when he comes home, he's left with ghosts of dug up thoughts and wonderings that insist on following him around the house. He'll come home and start to make dinner, and something will peer over his shoulder, whispering doubts into his ear. Or he'll eventually fall into bed, wrapped up tightly in warm, firm arms, and still be drenched in cold fear that something will go wrong – something *has* to go wrong, because no one should be this happy.

The body behind him shuffles. “So,” Richie sighs, pressing his forehead against Eddie's shoulder blade. “Are you going to tell me what's bugging you, or am I gonna have to tickle it out?”

Eddie looks over his shoulder, arching an eyebrow. “You'll *tickle* me?”

Richie half-shrugs. “I was gonna say I'd fuck it out of you, but I'm still tired from an hour ago. So I guess tickling will have to do.”

Eddie tries not to laugh, but with how tightly Richie is holding him, he's pretty sure that the other man can feel him trembling with laughter. He tries his best to turn in Richie's hold, eventually facing the other man.

“Seriously though.” Richie's fingertips ghost along his cheek. “What's up?”

It's late. And conversations like these shouldn't be had at two in the morning, when both of them are tired, and Eddie has a meeting to go to in – he looks over Richie's shoulder to another clock there – seven hours. So he swallows back whatever had been clawing up his throat. "Not ready to talk about it now," he offers instead. He nuzzles into Richie's chest, sighing against skin.

Richie knows better than to chase it. *Not now* is essentially their new code. It *will* be talked about, later; when they feel a bit more stable. So Richie gathers Eddie in his arms. It doesn't take long for sleep to drag them under.

Sometimes, he thinks that he can see her. Out of the corner of his eye, he'll see a figure in one of the armchairs in their living room, or peering around a wall, watching him. Nothing is ever there. When he whips around to look, all that meets him is an empty space. Or Richie, looking back at him with a tilted head, probably wondering what's wrong.

When he's home alone, especially during the night whenever Richie has been drafted into doing some appearances on talk shows or comedy bars around the city, Eddie can hear her voice.

He isn't good for you, Eddie Bear.

Eddie pushes the palms of his hands into his eyes. ***Shut up.***

No matter what room he wanders into, it'll follow him.

Look what you've done, it hisses over his shoulder. *Left a perfectly good, respectable woman for that boy. He was always trouble. His poor mother would be ashamed if she saw him now—*

Maggie Tozier visits every so often. She had always been so kind to him, letting him stay in their houses for the night when he was a kid. It wasn't until he was a bit older did he realise that Maggie might have known what Eddie's mom was like, and wanted to give him a

break from it; something he always readily took.

And he doesn't think he had ever seen Maggie, or even Went, as happy as they were when Richie told them that he wanted to marry Eddie.

Eddie almost jumps at the sound of the front door locking. "Eds?" Richie calls into the house.

"In my office," Eddie calls back.

It takes a minute for Richie to come to him, but when he does, he has all the tell-tale signs of being at one of the comedy bars. His hair is rumpled more than usual, and there's a thin sheen of sweat along his forehead. Eddie holds up a hand when Richie steps into the office. "Take a shower," he instructs, "I'm not kissing you looking like that."

Richie has the nerve to look affronted. "Why do you say such hurtful things to me? I've had a long night."

If only you knew about mine, Eddie thinks. But he stands from his desk, shooing Richie away. "Go take a shower. I'll be in the living room."

Richie joins him in the living room almost thirty minutes later. His hair is still wet, but he's changed into his sleep clothes; an old band tee and some baggy sweatpants. He slumps into the couch beside Eddie, mindful that the other man will have a fit if any water gets on to the fabric of the couch.

The TV is on, but Eddie isn't really paying attention. When Richie mumbles *what's on*, Eddie has to bring up the title card of the show to even remember.

The couch is covered in pillows and throws; an unnecessary amount, Richie had once claimed. But the protests died fairly quickly when he realised that the couch was now just another place he could nap. Pillows and blankets provided. One of them is thrown over Eddie's lap. Richie tugs at the side of it until Eddie eventually gives, scooting closer to the other man, and wrapping them both in the soft blanket.

Eddie's head finds its way to Richie's shoulder. He smells like lemons

and, faintly, like the sea. He recognises the scent as his own shower gel. If he had the energy in him, he'd probably tell Richie off for using his shit. He has his own.

But slouching further into the other man's side, he can't bring himself to care. Even when Richie wraps an arm around Eddie's shoulder, keeping him to his side, he thinks it's nice how Richie now smells like him.

Netflix runs. Richie must be the only one watching it. Every so often, he'll huff a laugh at some joke a character made. Eddie's mind is somewhere else.

He was always trouble.

He'll make you sick.

*That poor girl. You left her for **him**?*

A kiss is pressed into Eddie's hair. "Everything okay?" Richie mumbles.

Glancing around the living room, Eddie notices how much time has passed. A new episode is playing on the TV. Both of them have slouched further down on the couch. Richie has one foot perched on the edge of the coffee table. It's a testament to how out of it Eddie must be, for not kicking his foot off where they sometimes eat.

Eddie's fingers fidget with the fabric of the throw. "Just got some stuff on my mind, I guess."

Richie tilts his head. "Do you wanna talk about it?" he asks, adding, "It's okay if you don't."

"No, no. I do, I just...don't know how to go about it." He feels flushed, like his skin is screeching hot. He wonders vaguely if Richie can feel it from where their bodies are joined.

But all Richie does is nod, tugging Eddie a bit closer to his side. "Well, whenever you wanna talk, I'm here with open ears."

Eddie sighs, interlinking his fingers with Richie's. "Thank you."

And the lapse back into silence for a bit. The show drones on, and Eddie truly has forgotten about it. They must be a couple of episodes in, as just over the top of the TV, and out through one of the lancet windows looking out on to the street, he sees stars start to settle against the black sky. Out of the main city, he's always liked being able to see the stars and not have them drowned out by bright lights.

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"I mean," Eddie winces, wishing the words would come out that bit easier, and not try to catch in his throat. "If we ever have kids, what...what do you think I'll be like?"

Richie doesn't answer for a while. "I think you'll be a great dad. You'll look after them the way a parent should."

There's a long, drawn-out silence that settles over them; only partially filled with the chatter of characters on the TV.

Richie sniffs. "You think we'll have kids?" The question is so quiet. For all the shit he gives Richie about being a Trashmouth, every so often, Eddie will hear a voice that is so small and shaking, he can't believe it comes out of Richie's mouth.

"If you want to."

"Never really thought about it, really." Richie's arm tightens around him. "I was never with the right kind of person."

Eddie peers up, surprised to see Richie looking back at him. "And now?"

"Now I'm with you. And you're pretty great."

He can't help but snort. "I'll put it in my Twitter bio; *Eddie Tozier-Kasprak. Pretty Great.*"

An *Are You Still There* message pops up on the TV. Suddenly, Eddie's eyelids get heavier and he tries to hide a yawn behind his fist. "Wanna go to bed?"

Richie stretches. Every joint in his body seems to crack all at once, causing him, and Eddie, to wince. "Yeah," he eventually huffs. "Go on up. I'll turn off everything down here."

Finding and screening adoption agencies in New York is harder than it looks. That isn't to say that Eddie does a thorough job of sifting through each one he comes across; speaking to people on the phone, requesting meetings. Richie watches him work from his own office, most days. He doesn't know what could be funnier; adoption agencies trying to interrogate him for background checks and living conditions, or Eddie trying to flip it back on them. He really tries not to let stuff like that slip into his new material; but it's just too funny.

With Eddie holed away in his office, the rest of the house is eerily quiet. A house designed for kids, with no kids in it, is a fucking depressing thing to live in. Richie finishes putting away the last of the dishes. Lunch had been quiet, mostly filled with Eddie staring at his phone, waiting for a phone call that may or may not have come. After their food was gone, Eddie fled to his office. It's his space. Richie knows that. He works in there, and when things are getting a bit too much, that's where he hides. So Richie busies himself with cleaning up.

Almost an hour passes. When Richie eventually braves stepping into Eddie's office, he's armed with a mug of coffee and some toast. "Any luck?"

For all that Eddie goes on about keeping the house clean, his desk is anything but. Stacked high on either side of his laptop are printed pages of company websites, interview and appointment dates, and things that they needed to get like marriage certificates and the like.

"A couple stand out," Eddie rubs his face. He picks up a page from a small pile at one side of his desk. On it is a print out of an agency's website. There's the usual stock-photo of a smiling family on a day trip. Richie pulls a face when Eddie hands him some print outs. It all looks a bit fake, but he supposes that's what gets people's attention.

Their social worker has her own collection of agencies to pull from; but Eddie being Eddie, he wanted to do it himself. Richie turns, perching on the edge of Eddie's desk. Flicking through the pages, he hums. "So we pick an agency," he says slowly, "and then what?"

Eddie sits back in his chair. "They'll interview us, make sure that the kids they have are compatible. Then they'll probably want to come out here and check out the house." He scrubs his face. "It's a pain in the ass."

Richie sets the page down. "All some sort of protocol though," he reasons, watching Eddie slowly lose his mind. Richie plucks a piece of toast from the tray and hands it to the other man. "I know you just ate, but you need to eat more. You're wasting away."

The look Eddie gives him could be, to any other person, probably enough to kill. But Richie can see some fondness behind the stare. Begrudgingly, Eddie takes the toast from Richie's hand.

An agency finally gets back to them. After a two-way interrogation, Eddie drags Richie into his office to get onto a phone call between them and a social worker with the agency. She asks them the questions they've answered already; what is their home situation, where do they live, what do they do for a living? All necessary questions, he knows, but annoying when Eddie finds that he has to dig up old divorce papers from Myra. Because they need to know that, for some reason.

Richie doesn't like talking about it either; Myra belongs to a period of time that's been left in the past now. Lumped in with their return to

Derry, the Clown, the fact that he nearly *died*, Eddie's put all of that shit in a box, locked it, and thrown it into the sea. When he looks over to Richie, refusing to look at his divorce certificate, he reaches out and links their fingers together.

The woman is nice. Sandra's worked with the agency for years, and she already has a group of kids lined up for Eddie and Richie to look at. It's only then does it all hit Eddie – they're going to be parents.

They're going to be responsible for a kid.

Oh shit.

Richie's hand tightens around his. Assuring and anchoring him to the ground.

The phone call eventually gets transferred to Skype. "Usually I would like to meet you both in person in my office," Sandra, explains, shuffling some papers off-screen, "but I'm afraid I don't have any available slots until next week."

Eddie nods. "That's alright."

"Are you and your husband busy?" Sandra looks up through her glasses.

Could be a trick question, he can't help but think. "My husband works from home," Richie steps in. "I can be gone for a couple of hours some nights, but other than that, I'm home."

A question they were asked in the interviews. Would you be home? Could you support a child with your working schedules?

But Sandra doesn't hound them as the others did. If Eddie is ever asked to get that much paperwork out and copied again, he'll kill someone. Wage sheets, proof of employment, past work references. And that was just for his work life.

Sandra clears her throat. "Well, I have a number of children compatible with you both." From what Eddie can see on-screen, there's a small pile of files on one side of her desk. Sandra pulls out the first.

All of them seem like good kids. Each one that Sandra talks about seems like the perfect fit. Richie, for the most part, does most of the talking. Eddie's tongue just feels like it's made of led, sitting at the bottom of his mouth, refusing to budge.

Their meeting lasts almost an hour and a half. In that time, he thinks he has said all of ten words.

But Sandra pulls out the last file. Before she opens it, a small frown creases her brow. "Oh," she says, opening it. "I'm not sure how this got in here."

Eddie tilts his head. "Are they non-compatible?"

"No, no, they are."

"They?"

"A set of twins," Sandra explains, setting the file down on her table, out of shot.

Richie frowns slightly. "Twins?"

The woman nods. "They were brought in together, and unfortunately, we don't want to see them separated. I'm sorry, I never asked you both if you would want to adopt two. There are different criteria behind adopting two."

Eddie sits forward. He clears his throat. "What are they like?"

Sandra adjusts her glasses. "They were in quite a bad home situation until social services removed them from their parents care. They've been in foster homes for a year now. From what the foster parents have told me, they're quite. But well behaved. Very interested in sports and TV." A small smile ghosts her lips. "Typical eight-year-olds."

"They're eight," Eddie says quietly.

Richie clears his throat. "And are they two boys, two girls?"

"A boy and a girl." Sandra fishes out what seems to be their file.

“Lucas and Allison.”

Each file Sandra has is made up of smaller ones; medical history, a small report of their life before being put up for adoption. The twins' file is the same.

“The report is only for the girl.”

Eddie tilts his head. “What for?” Because if anything else, this is probably where he steps in. He can feel Richie looking at the side of his face, but the other man turns away again.

“Oh nothing substantial,” Sandra explains. Pulling out one small sheet of blue coloured paper, she runs her eyes over it. He's learned over the past couple of interviews that a medical sheet can mean just about anything; from simple routine doctor's visits and their shots, to the kid having some sort of cardiac or respiratory problem. And with that sheet comes even more questions; *would you be able to provide care for the child?* “Although apparently she's being screened for autism in the next few weeks.”

As if that would matter, Eddie thinks. *She's probably still perfect.*

He quickly glances over to Richie. The other man does the same. After a minute, Eddie turns back around. “If...if we wanted to see them, when would that be?”

Sandra sets down the files. Adjusting her glasses again, she hums. “Well, I would have to review this talk, and filter down the kids again. I know it's tedious, but we're just trying to find you someone who will stick well.”

And he understands. Eddie sits back against his chair. Behind him, Richie's arm is loosely thrown over the back of it. It's grounding.

When their call is finished, neither of them speaks or even moves until Eddie's computer screen blinks to black. Richie squeezes Eddie's shoulder. “Whatcha thinking?”

Eddie's fingers fidget with a pen. “What do *you* think?”

Richie rubs his face and adjusts his glasses. “Any one of them would

be perfect,” he says quietly. “But...I don’t know, dude. When she mentioned the twins-”

It would be two kids. They went out looking for one, and it would be two. But, Eddie thinks, they would have more kids later on anyway. And they could provide a better life for them than the one they had.

Eddie leans forward and presses a kiss to Richie’s jaw; difficult to do, since the man is still rambling. “We’ll ask Sandra if we can meet the twins,” Eddie says against skin.

He isn’t sure what he was expecting; a car drive up a long, narrow cobblestone drive, to a large manor house just outside of the city. Meeting them on the steps, a gaunt-faced woman in a pressed suit jacket and pencil skirt would meet them, look at their joined hands with a raised eyebrow, and usher them inside.

But that’s absolutely not what happens.

Richie’s hand is glued to his, refusing to let go. Not that he would want to; he needs Richie there, anchoring him to the ground. His heart hammers against his ribcage, desperately trying to break through and flop out on to the floor in front of him. That’s what it feels like, anyway. He’s vaguely worried if either Richie or their social worker can hear the thumping.

Sandra already explained to them what to expect.

They’re going through as many emotions and feelings as you two, she said on the ride over. The only difference is that you’re adults and they’re kids. They could be fine with you two being there, or they may cry and want to leave. Don’t take it personally.

He would never. Their only home and family is gone. Of course, they could be frightened. They might not even talk. But from what their foster parents told them, they seem fine – as long as they’re with each other.

They meet the kids in their foster home. It's a nice two-story house in Nyack, with a green lawn out front, with toys and a plastic slide strewn about over the grass.

The foster parents meet them outside. They seem like a nice couple, greeting Sandra first as she runs forward, introducing both Richie and Eddie to them.

"Our other kids are at school," Kate says, gesturing for them to walk towards the house. She gives a slight laugh, looking towards Richie. "Though, they wanted to stay to meet you in particular. The older ones are big fans."

Richie rubs the back of his neck with his free hand. "I can only apologise, I guess."

Kate and her husband Derek lead them through the house. He can only imagine what foster houses look like, but it's a lot like what he sees. Each room looks three-quarters of the way clean, but toys and blankets are strewn about. Along the walls of each room, pictures of kids and paintings are framed and pinned up.

Sandra turns to them as soon as they reach the kitchen. "I have to stay with you both, but I can be a bit away so you can talk to the kids yourselves."

Looking out a large window that looks out on to the garden, Eddie's breath almost catches in his throat when he sees two kids in a sandbox outside. Richie must see the same as his grip on Eddie's hand tightens.

Eddie nods. "That's okay," he rasps.

Kate shows them out, but ultimately, steps back into the house. Sandra stays at the porch as both Richie and Eddie walk forward. Neither one of them gets ahead of the other, or falls behind. Richie's grip on him tightens to the point of pain, but Eddie can't do anything, but return it.

They're so small, is the first thing that pops into Eddie's head. *Jesus, were we ever that small at that age?*

The boy – *Lucas*, Eddie reminds himself – is the first to spot them. He's in the middle of moulding some sand together, but when he spots both of them walking over, he sets down his spade.

Eddie holds up his hand. "Hey," he greets. Surprisingly, it doesn't catch in his throat like his other words did.

Lucas cocks his head, eyes squinting. "Hi."

Richie gestures to the pit. "Can we join you guys?"

Lucas glances over to his sister, who doesn't say anything. But he nods. "I need some help building a castle," Lucas says simply, picking up another shovel and pointing it at Richie. When Richie's hand slips out of Eddie, he has to physically check himself from chasing it. He watches Richie perch against the edge of the sandbox, keeping some distance from the boy.

Lucas hands him a small plastic bucket. "We didn't have sand where we lived," he says, piling more sand on to his mound. Eddie's hands fidget by his side. Richie fills the bucket and pats it down. When he hands to Lucas, the boy takes it with a small smile. "Thank you."

Richie adjusts his glasses. "Where did you use to live?"

"Indianapolis," Lucas says, stumbling slightly over the word.

"That's rough," Richie nods seriously.

It wrangles a light laugh out of the boy. "You're silly."

"The *silliest*," Eddie rolls his eyes, but smiles nonetheless. He glances over to the other side of the sandbox. The girl has her feet perched up against the edge, but she looks down at the sand. Vaguely, he remembers what the social worker said about her possibly being autistic. "Do you want to play something else, Allison?"

The girl glances up. She doesn't meet his eyes, but after a minute of gnawing her thumbnail, she nods and points to a nearby stack of blocks. They're scattered in the grass, but Eddie stands up, and fetches them. He holds one out to the girl. "What would you like to build?"

She looks at the block for a second, before placing it down along the lip of the sandbox. Eddie hands her another, and that's put on top of the first one. They keep going in mutual silence until a small tower forms. Lucas watches out of the corner of his eye, even as he draws some small patterns in the sand.

From the porch, Sandra scribbles down some notes.

Author's Note:

So I don't know how adoption in America works, so I've ended up mashing what happens where I live to things I saw online. But who cares about accuracy when we're all just here for Soft Boys and the beginning of their hoarde of children.

Next chapter will just be them settling in and stuff like that. Sophie might get her own little fic because I love her.

Comments & Kudos appreciated!